

THE
COUNTRY SPECTATOR.

NUMBER IV.

TUESDAY, 30 October, 1792.

*Carmines tu gaudes ; hic delectatur iambis ;
Ille Bionis sermonibus et sale nigro.* HOR.

One likes the witty, one the solemn strain ;
A third for satire calls, but calls—in vain.

IT is a useful precept, which teaches us to listen to advice, when we have no reason to doubt the friendly intention of the person, who offers it. As every man is liable to err, so are his errors more easily discovered by others, than by himself. We are unable to take an accurate survey of our own conduct, as the eye cannot see objects distinctly, which are placed too near it. I shall, therefore, always listen with attention to the hints of those, who seem to wish me well ; and I cannot but consider it as an infallible prognostic of my meeting with a welcome reception from the Public, that I have already

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been judged not unworthy of friendly advice, having received several obliging letters of admonition respecting the management of my work. These hints given to a young Author I consider as so many instances of parental regard shewn me by those, who are well acquainted with mankind, and more especially with the dangers and difficulties, which beset an adventurer on his entrance into the world. But there is one inconvenience peculiar to the writer of periodical Essays, of which none of my Correspondents seem sufficiently aware; it is, that he must adapt his speculations to the taste of Readers of every description. Works of science and systems of philosophy are rarely looked into by those, who are in pursuit of variety or miscellaneous knowledge: uniformity alone is expected; and they, who are not delighted with the subject, proceed no farther than the title-page or chapter of Contents. But in works of heterogeneous information every Reader expects to find the very species of entertainment, of which he is in search; and if he does not immediately meet with it, he becomes impatient and is soon disgusted. He reflects not on the diversity of choice, by which different men are distinguished, and refers all excellence to the standard of his own taste. Since, however, the art of pleasing every palate is not attainable, and yet every guest has an equal right to expect gratification, I will lay before my Readers some of the letters, which have been sent me, on the subject of my undertaking.

TO the COUNTRY SPECTATOR.

Dear Mr. SPECTATOR in the *Country*,

I AM very happy to find, that we Country people have at last been thought to deserve a Spectator of our own. I have often wished, when I have read the papers of the famous Mr. *Spectator*, and when he mentions, that they were laid on the tables of his London friends at breakfast, that I had lived in those days : tho' if I had, I know not whether I should have been much the better for it ; for my family has resided in ———shire from time immemorial ; and I suppose, the only difference would have been, that instead of being *Martin Meanwell* that I now am, I should have been *Abraham Meanwell* his great grand-father, and thus I might not have received the Spectators till a considerable time after their publication. But I am not so learned as to dispute with you about what you scholars call *personal identity*, and therefore I will hasten to the business.

You must know then, that in our Town, which is not one of the largest mentioned in your Advertisement, you have a very respectable list of above forty subscribers hung up in the Bookseller's shop ; and if you will listen to my advice, the number will certainly be increased. We are all very well pleased with you upon the whole ; tho' there is one complaint laid against you, that I your friend and well wisher, think it proper to acquaint you with. I

have heard it remarked three or four times in company, that your writing is not amiss, but that you are too *sententious*; nay, I once heard it suggested, that you were *dull*; from the latter charge, you may be assured, that I vindicated you; from the former I scarcely knew how. If you have at all observed the world, you must be convinced that people are soon tired of any thing serious, be it as good as it may be; and if you were to write even sermons, your Readers would not like you the worse for being rather entertaining. That you have hitherto been grave, I think you will not deny. In your first Paper you could do very little more than what you stile "developing your plan," tho' your conclusion is written in such a stile of pious resignation to the Public, that I could not read it without earnestness and emphasis. N^o. II is rather better; but in your Paper of yesterday, except in the first page or two, you write with as much solemnity as if you had been the *Rambler*: and your subject is such, that without the trouble of thinking nobody can tell whether you are right or wrong in what you say. Now idle reading is of all things the most pleasant: and whatever you may be pleased to tell us by way of compliment, I am certain that we in the Country do not rival the people of London in affairs of literature; and therefore, Mr. Country Spectator, if you are too learned, you will get into a terrible scrape. You must often relax your muscles and condescend to look like other mortals, or there will be a dread-

ful desertion among your Readers in our neighbourhood; an event, which would give infinite concern to

Your sincere friend,

24 Oct. 1792. *M. Meanwell.*

P. S. My youngest daughter shrewdly suspects, that whatever you may say of your age, you are not so young as you affect to be; for that she never knew a young man so grave, and that if ever she should meet with one, she will neither read his books, nor have any thing else to do with him.

To the COUNTRY SPECTATOR.

Sir,

OF your predecessors the Periodical Essayists some are as contemptible for their levity and trifling, as others are admirable for their exalted lessons of virtue. Without being peevish or saturnine, I cannot help preferring the sublime doctrines of morality to colloquial discussions of the subject of the day. I am now far advanced beyond the meridian of life, and have devoted a long series of years to study and meditation. I can look back on an ocean of literature, which I have traversed, and my memory dwells with pleasure on those happy isles in the world of Philosophy, where Reason has found fresh supplies of intellectual strength, where Fancy has wandered amidst the mazes of abstracted thought, and where Virtue has felt her nerves invigorated and

her drooping spirits animated to hope. You will, therefore, easily believe, that the RAMBLER has been my manual thro' life. In my youth, when it first appeared, I was one of the few, who were willing to admire its manly sense and profound disquisitions, which the multitude, who are caught only with meretricious ornaments, neglected or despised. It still affords me pleasure unabated by repetition ; and it has taught me to endure sickness and infirmity with the fortitude of a Philosopher and the meekness of a Christian. Of the other Periodical productions no one presumes to claim admission into the first class of excellence, except the SPECTATOR : but let it not be imagined, that it owes a moment of its immortality to the low jests of *Tickell*, or the obscenity of *Steele*. The strength of *Addison* has protected his weaker associates from the attack of Time, as one of *Homer's* heroes is said to have defended himself and his less warlike friend by holding his shield before both. Trifling and levity may, perhaps, contribute to introduce an author to the short-lived notice of his cotemporaries ; but he, who would leave behind him traces of his existence, when the laugh of merriment has subsided and the meteors of fashion have disappeared, must raise the superstructure of his fame on the solid basis of reality and Truth.

I am, Sir,

20 Oct. 1792.

Your's, *Misophlunus*.

Yorkshire.

To both these Gentlemen my best thanks are due for their salutary admonitions: and since each of them gives me such advice, as it would be imprudent to disregard, tho' they lead me in directions as opposite as the North and South, I shall endeavour to compromise matters with them. Sometimes when I am writing, I shall lay before me the letter of my Correspondent, who admires *bagatelle*; and now and then I shall pay attention to the sedate old Gentleman, who is so desperately in love with *Dr. Johnson*. But to the writer of the following note what shall I reply? He seems to be not very charitably disposed to his friends and neighbours; and he is scarcely more civil to me. By accepting his proposal, I should draw down on myself the vengeance of many a terrific dame, and he, the witty rogue, would be the first to laugh at my distress. But satire is quite foreign to my purpose. Besides, I would have him informed, that the follies and absurdities he speaks of, are to be met with in my own town, perhaps, as plentifully as in his; and this being the case, I cannot with propriety neglect my particular friends in order to pay attention to strangers.

Dear C. S.

I AM a young man, and am allowed to have a tolerably good knack at *taking off* people. I catch all their singularities at one glance; and by using their favorite modes of expression, talking on their favorite topics and introducing their favourite re-

marks, I can make a whole company instantly perceive, whom I am holding out to ridicule. There are several people in our town, who ought certainly to be laughed at: and tho' I could not imitate their gestures on paper, yet I could easily do every thing else, so that whoever read their characters in the Country Spectator, would immediately know them as well, as if you had given their names with the streets, in which they live. Now I am thinking, that your Papers might be made wonderfully diverting, by being sometimes interspersed with living characters. It would be much to your advantage to listen to my proposal; for every body would read your Essays: they, who came under your lash would *con* over every word to examine the justice of the charges brought against them; and they, who had escaped, would amuse themselves with laughing at their neighbours. If you mean, Sir, to accept my services, do not print this letter, and I will send you three or four *Old Maids*, in the course of a few posts.

Your's,

19 Oct. 1792.

Andrew Sner.

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To a Correspondent.

H. B. of NEWARK, (who sent the C. S. an Essay on *Female Coquetry*, transcribed *verbatim* from No. 390 of the Spectator, and who at the same time wondered that no Essay had been written on the subject) is adapted to any undertaking, for which unblushing impudence and contemptible cunning qualify their possessor. But H. B.'s hand-writing, having been seen in *four letters*, is now well-known; and as charity induces us to hope, that he will be able to find no assistant in his *wantonly malicious* design, he might as well relinquish the correspondence at once, and devote his leisure to some worthier pursuit.